

Against the Grain

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People Profile: Roula Awad-Harb

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Writing a Collection Management Plan

We suggest a small team be appointed to develop a draft plan. Invite all library staff to participate by commenting on drafts. An iterative process of drafting and discussion should be paced to ensure that disagreements and complexities do not paralyze the effort. Discussion in appropriate campus forums and formal approval is the final step.

The benefits of writing a plan are the process of thinking through the collection management strategy in all its complex detail, having an agreed plan to guide collection management decision-making, and communicating collection priorities and strategies to internal and external audiences. The plan may take a dual form, comprising a detailed version for internal library audiences and an overview for external audiences.

The plan needs to be written at a level that is useful, but not with so much detail that it will bog down the writer or the reader. Start with more macro-level guidelines for the collection as a whole, and then drill down to more detail over time. Brevity and simplicity, hard as they are to achieve in treating a complex set of inter-dependent decision-making strategies, are virtues. Strive for a five to ten page plan, with a shorter version for external audiences.

We have all experienced investing considerable effort in writing collection policies that then sit on people's bookshelves gathering dust. How do we make the collection management plan a dynamic document that is used and updated? Taking the time to systematically update the plan will be the biggest challenge for many libraries. A wiki format might be useful in supporting continual updating and sharing.

Elements of a Collection Management Plan

What follows is an overview of issues inherent in responsible collection management, along with questions meant to initiate conversations. These will in turn generate further topics for discussion, research, and decisions. Collection management work is intricate and the elements are highly inter-dependent and overlapping. You needn't address all these issues in a written plan, but they are well worth thinking through with colleagues.

1. Collection Values, Situation, and Outlook — Begin with a statement of values and goals informing collection management activities. Then try to articulate an overarching strategy for management of the collections that provides a framework within which the following specific elements of the plan are clearly tactical implementations of the strategy.

What are your key collection goals and priorities for the long term? What mix of print and digital materials do you currently have in books, monographs, and other key genres, and what are you aiming for in future? What unique or little-held materials do you have in the collection? Have you digitized these? What role will

the library play, if any, in regional and national archiving and resource sharing efforts?

What parts of the collection will receive priority for retention in print form? How risk tolerant is your institution? To what extent do you already rely on other libraries for collection access? What are your operating assumptions about how other libraries will be taking care of collection segments your local library is not prioritizing? What are the key collection needs and priorities over the next three to five years? How do you plan to address these? What benefits will accrue to library users from this collection management plan?

2. Print and Digital: Format Preferences and Strategies — **HathiTrust**, **Portico**, **LOCKSS**, and other trusted digital archives create an opportunity to align shared collection management strategies with preservation and access to the growing corpus of digital surrogates. What digital repositories meet your criteria as trusted repositories? What is your policy on withdrawing local print copies and relying on

digital surrogates and a shared print copy stored remotely? What is your policy on retention of print originals that you scan locally?

3. Collective Collections Context — Managing local collections in the context of collaborative programs provides economies of scale, potential expansion of the scope of resources available to a library, and a strong rationale for local action. It also provides political cover for the inevitable pushback from some patrons. A successful collective collections program will provide the essential cooperative service layer, including friction-free, instantaneous delivery of digital texts, print on demand, and speedy delivery of print originals when needed.

What are your goals in joining a shared print archiving program? What is the archiving model (e.g., central storage vs. "archiving in place"), and the collection profile of the consortium: i.e., journals only, unique materials, last copy repository, publisher-based collections of journals? Discipline? Area studies, etc.?

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against the grain people profile

Roula Awad-Harb

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BORN & LIVED: I was born and grew up in Byblos, Lebanon, the oldest city on the Mediterranean.

EARLY LIFE: I graduated from the University with a BS in Library Science in 1988, and lived in Canada, France, and returned to Lebanon in 1993.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: I started my career as a French language teacher; I worked in sales. The last 11 years I started working at **Notre Dame University** started as a reference Librarian, cataloging Librarian. In 2004 promoted to Head Gifts and Exchange Department, in 2008 promoted to Head of Acquisitions, Gifts and Exchange Department. Also, I am a member of **LLA (Lebanese Library Association)** and a member of several committees at the University.

FAMILY: Married to **George Harb**, we have two daughters, **Tara 17** and **Nelly 14** years old.

IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE: Cooking, gardening, decorating, and a lot of shopping.

PET PEEVES/WHAT MAKES ME MAD: People hating each other around the globe.

PHILOSOPHY: Enjoy life with your beloved ones.

MOST MEMORABLE CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: In 2004 I established a new Gifts & Exchange Department from scratch. Within six months, I had to manage 100,000 books from a donation stored in an unhealthy warehouse. Twenty-five big palettes were dumped on me. I was obliged to unpack, clean, organize, select, shelve, and distribute all materials among three campuses. I only had two part-time-student assistants to help. It was a big physical and mental challenge for me; in 2008 I was promoted to Head of Acquisitions, Gifts & Exchange Department.

GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW: Finding an appropriate scholarship to earn my Masters in Library Science.

HOW DO YOU SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: I have a concern about "E" dominance in the information industry. Now we face wrestling with print and eBooks, after five years, "E" vs. WHAT? 🌿

